

**BACKGROUND:**

Oil is one of the most common pollutants in our water. When animals such as ducks, pelicans, geese, and other waterfowl come in contact with oil, their feathers become matted. Oily, matted feathers lose their ability to insulate. Because of this, the birds can die in cold weather. When a bird tries to clean the oil off its feathers, it may swallow some of the oil, which can lead to stomach ulcers. The only way to save the oil-covered bird is to scrub it with a detergent.

OBJECTIVE:

Students will try several ways to clean the "oil spill" from water. These methods are similar to the ones used by cleanup crews in real oil spills.

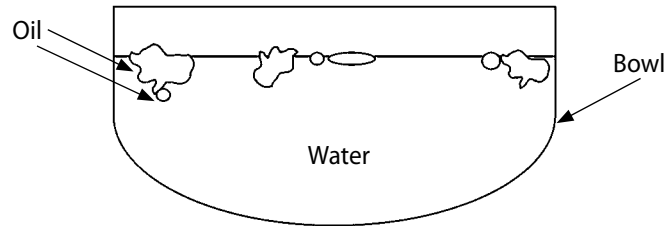
MATERIALS:

- 1 large bowl
- 1 measuring cup
- Water
- Cooking oil
- Different dishwashing detergents
- Paper towels or a piece of cloth
- Sponges
- String

TIME: 1 hour

Oil Spill

Grades 2 – 8

**PROCEDURE:**

- 1) Fill half of the bowl with water
- 2) Measure $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of oil and pour into the bowl of water
- 3) Gently shake the bowl to create "waves" (did the oil and water mix?)
- 4) Now try to clean up the oil using:
 - Paper towel or cloth
 - Use string to make a border around the oil and try to drag the oil to one side of the bowl
 - Use the sponge to try to soak up the oil

QUESTIONS:

Which method of cleaning up the oil spill was most effective?

Which was least effective?

How can we prevent future oil spills? (Storm drain pollution, etc...)

Thanks to the EPA for this activity

